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REAR-ADMIRAL

WILLIAM BRANFORD SHUBRICK.

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A SKETCH.

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REAR-ADMIRAL

WILLIAM BRANFORD SHUBRICK.

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A SKETCH.

By Susan Fenmore Cooper

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## WILLIAM BRANFORD SHUBRICK.

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THE country can ill afford to lose the memory of its best men. Every pure and upright life has an inherent value much beyond ordinary calculation. But when a manly life thus pure, thus upright, and prolonged to a period of more than fourscore years, is given with noble fidelity to the public service, it attains a dignity which commands our grateful homage.

William Branford Shubrick, the sixth son and ninth child of a family of sixteen, was born October 31, 1790, on Bull's Island, one of those islands of the Southern seaboard yielding the beautiful long cotton of Carolina. The island, which derived its name from Governor Bull, was then the property of Colonel Thomas Shubrick, who had rendered gallant service to the country in the war of the Revolution, entering the army when little more than twenty, and acting successively as aid to General Lincoln and to General Greene in the most important campaigns of the Southern department.

From Belvedere, the home plantation of Colonel Thomas Shubrick, six sons passed into the military service of the country, the two elder, Thomas and Richard, who both died young, in the army, the four younger in the navy. John Templar and William Branford Shubrick entered the naval service in the same year, in 1806. Lieutenant John

Templar Shubrick, after being engaged in several important actions of the war of 1812, and receiving a medal for his gallant conduct in the *Hornet*, was taken prisoner in the *President* in 1815, and carried to Bermuda. At the proclamation of peace, a few weeks later, he returned home, and in May sailed again with the squadron of Commodore Decatur, bound for the Mediterranean to settle the difficulties with Algiers. Forty days after the squadron sailed from America, Commodore Decatur compelled the Dey to sign a satisfactory treaty, at Algiers. Lieutenant Shubrick was then placed in command of the *Epervier* and sent home, bearing with him the treaty of peace. But the *Epervier* never made her port. She was seen to pass the rock of Gibraltar early in July, but from that hour nothing is known of her course. Her fate remains one of the solemn mysteries of the deep.

The two younger sons of Colonel Shubrick, Edward Rutledge and Irvine, entered the navy rather later. Captain Edward Shubrick died at sea in 1844, when connected with the Brazil squadron. Captain Irvine Shubrick, after serving as a midshipman at Algiers in 1815, rendered gallant service in the expedition against the piratical Malays of Sumatra in 1832, commanding the detachment of seamen and marines which landed at Quallah Battoo and captured the town by assault, after a vigorous resistance. He died at Wilmington in 1849.

The life of William Branford Shubrick was prolonged many years beyond those of his brothers. Born but a few months after the final adoption of the Constitution, which merged a weak confederacy into a nation soon to become powerful, he lived to see the country pass through phases of existence which among older races have required cen-

turies of time, and many successive generations of men to effect. The vast panorama of vigorous national development unfolded about him, year after year, with marvelous rapidity. And in the midst of this impressive growth there came one great crisis after another—foreign wars, political changes, financial struggles, and at last treachery, conspiracy, and civil war threatening the very life of the nation. During all those fourscore years, and in the midst of those convulsions, he held with simple manly dignity the position he had taken in early youth: brave, upright, faithful, generous, a true American gentleman.

It was in the summer of 1806 that the lad of sixteen received his warrant as a midshipman, and made his first cruise in the *Wasp*, Captain Smith. The navy was then in a very feeble condition. There was little, one should suppose, to attract a youth of spirit to the service. At that date the country had not a single ship of the line. The miserable policy of defending the harbors, bays, and sounds of a vast coast by gun-boats alone, had been adopted by the government. With a commerce that already carried the flag of the republic into all the seas of the known world, the armed marine of the nation was treated with a neglect strangely short-sighted. The commercial shipping of the country already amounted to a tonnage of 1,200,000. And yet there was but one station where an American cruiser was ever seen. The insolence of the Barbary pirates had rendered it imperatively necessary to keep a small squadron of two or three vessels in the Mediterranean. This was the only foreign station. Neither was there any regular home squadron, although there were constant complaints of irregular proceedings and molestations on the part of the English and French cruisers at the very

mouths of the principal harbors of the country. But with all this neglect of the navy on the part of the government, the spirit of the people was thoroughly maritime, as, indeed, it always had been from the time of the earliest colonists. There were in every generation many gallant youths to whom the life of a sailor was full of attraction, for whom perils and adventures found an additional charm from their connection with the ocean. And already in 1806 the personal character of the navy, if we may use the phrase, stood very high; the gallantry of its small but brilliant corps of officers had given dignity to the service in spite of neglect by the government. "Perhaps no service," says the historian of the navy, "ever had so large a proportion of what was excellent, and so small a proportion of that which was defective, as the navy of the United States the day peace was signed with Tripoli. It united a stern discipline, a high moral tone, with rare models of seamanship." It was at this period that the young Shubrick brothers left the plantation at Belvedere to enter the naval service. The four years' war with Tripoli had just closed, and the glow of its daring achievements was still felt throughout the country.

During the first years of his life as a midshipman, Mr. Shubrick, in common with all his brother officers, must have had many annoyances to endure from the uncertain, short-sighted policy of the government concerning that arm of the public service. It was the period of the impressment of American seamen by the English authorities, and the period when commanders of British cruisers held themselves authorized to search American vessels of war for deserters—in short, it was the day when the *Chesapeake* lowered her flag to the *Leopard*.

In May, 1807, Mr. Shubrick was ordered to the *Wasp*, a beautiful sloop carrying eighteen guns, under the command of Captain Smith, and destined for the Mediterranean. On the 10th of June the *Wasp* sailed for England, bearing dispatches. The vessel had been but a few days in English waters when her officers received the news of the blow to the *Chesapeake*. They were burning with indignation at this insult to the flag. War was looked for immediately. Guns were overhauled, magazines examined, and all prepared for a desperate conflict. The officers and crew were constantly put through all the manœuvres of a severe naval battle. And every other ship in the navy carried on the same practice, not only at the moment, but until the declaration of war, five years later. This vigilance and severe discipline prepared the way for future victories. In October the Mediterranean squadron returned to Boston. Mr. Shubrick remained in the *Wasp*, which was employed in enforcing the embargo, until 1810. Not only the commander, Captain Lawrence, but "all the officers," wrote Mr. Shubrick, at a later day, "were of high character, and in such a school and at such a time a young aspirant was in the way to learn his duty." Captain Lawrence became his fast friend. And at this time he also formed an intimacy with one of his messmates, a midshipman like himself, whose home was in the Otsego hills. It was an intimacy which ripened into a manly friendship, warm, deep, and lasting, remaining unbroken until the last hours of life. Mr. Shubrick's friend left the navy a year or two later, on his marriage, and became a farmer, and later still a writer, but he was through life a sailor at heart, and the sympathy between them remained singularly true and deep from early youth to old age.



The war cloud hanging over the country varied frequently in aspect, now apparently dispersing under negotiation, then growing darker, laden with fresh outrage of the laws and rights of nations. At length, in 1812, came the crisis. It found the naval service of the country utterly inadequate to the duties of protecting a vast mercantile marine and of defending 2,000 miles of sea-board. In the year 1812 the navy of Great Britain registered 1,060 sail, of which between seven and eight hundred were in effective condition—much the most powerful naval force the world had ever seen; more powerful, indeed, at that hour than the armed marines of all other Christian powers together. America at the same date had just *seventeen vessels of war* in effective condition, and nine of these were of a class less than frigates. It is true, there were the gun-boats; but of what avail that entire diminutive fleet against any one of the twenty powerful squadrons which England could at a moment send upon the American coast? “It is not to be concealed,” says the author of the *History of the Navy*, “that at this precise moment three two-decked ships of the enemy could have driven the whole of the public marine of America before them.”

This inconceivable apathy, as regards the navy, has been explained in a manner as extraordinary as the apathy itself. To keep American vessels of war at sea, in face of the overwhelming marine force of Great Britain, was believed by some political leaders to be impossible, and a project is said to have been entertained by the cabinet of laying up all the naval vessels in ordinary, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy! Happily, two distinguished officers, Captain Bainbridge and Captain Stewart, were then at Washington, and made a written remonstrance

against the scheme, so vigorous that the idea was abandoned. Proofs that such a project was formed, and that those two officers remonstrated on the occasion, are said to exist in the archives of the department at Washington. One can imagine the indignation with which a plan of this nature would be discussed by the spirited young men filling forecabin, wardroom, and cabin of every American naval craft then afloat.

After the declaration of war, Mr. Shubrick made one cruise in the *Hornet*, Captain Lawrence, and saw the fine chase of the *Belvidera* by the frigate *Constitution*, Commodore Rodgers, and the escape of the English vessel, so skillfully managed by her commander. In January, 1813, he was promoted, and transferred as lieutenant to the *Constellation*, Captain Stewart, fitting out at Washington. As soon as the vessel was ready for sea, she dropped down abreast of Craney Island to cover the fortifications recently begun on that ground.

Some twenty ships of the line of the enemy's force, among them the flags of two admirals, were cruising before Hampton Roads. On the 18th three frigates came into the roads, one, the *Junon*, moving up to the quarantine ground and destroying some small vessels. On the 20th, in a misty night, a flotilla of fifteen gun-boats, one under Lieutenant Shubrick, was sent out to attack the English vessel. Forming in a crescent, the flotilla poured a brisk cannonade into the frigate. It was some time before this fire was returned, as the commander of the *Junon* would appear to have been taken by surprise, and, indeed, the defence was so feeble that this vessel might possibly have been captured by the gun-boats had it not been for her two consorts moving to her support. When the engagement had continued about

an hour, the flotilla was signaled to withdraw. The boat commanded by Lieutenant Shubrick happened to be nearest to the enemy. "That brave young officer," said Commodore Tatnall, an eye-witness, "obeyed the order *very slowly*, and continued to blaze away at the frigate. This caused the concentration of the enemy's fire upon that single boat. Still he moved off slowly, firing as he retreated, until a signal made especially for him directed him to withdraw and take in tow a disabled gun-boat." This he did without losing a single man. With the next flood tide a fleet of fourteen sail of the enemy came into the roads, and, ascending to the mouth of the James, prepared to send up a large force in boats. As the defence of the batteries on Craney Island was of great moment, Captain Cassin, then in command at Norfolk, sent three lieutenants of the *Constellation*, among them Lieutenant Shubrick, with 100 seamen, to take charge of the principal batteries. On the morning of the 22d the enemy landed a large force at a point beyond the reach of the gun-boats, and, rather later, a landing was also attempted on Craney Island at a point protected from the gun-boats, but exposed to the fire of the seamen's battery. The fire from this battery, one gun of which was commanded by Lieutenant Shubrick, is said to have been delivered with singular coolness and precision. It was so effectual that the enemy was repulsed.

The officers and men of the *Constellation* gained great credit for their steadiness, discipline, and spirit on this occasion, Captain Cassin declaring that the fire from their battery resembled, in precision and effectiveness, the shooting of riflemen.

There was a large force of the enemy then lying in Hampton Roads, and there could be little doubt that an

attempt would be made upon the *Constellation* by parties in boats. Captain Stewart took very peculiar measures to protect his vessel against a surprise. The *Constellation* was anchored in the middle of the narrow channel, and on each side of her were moored seven gun-boats, one under the command of Mr. Shubrick. A circle of booms protected the gun-boats against boarders, and enabled them to keep up a flanking fire on all assailants of the frigate. The gun-deck guns of the *Constellation* were housed and her ports shut. Not a rope was allowed to droop from the vessel. The stern ladders and gangway cleats were removed. Boarding netting was made of ratline boiled in half-made pitch, of a hardness to defy a knife; while nail-rods and small chains were secured to this netting in lines about three feet apart. This netting, a sort of chain armor, was spread outward and upward towards the yard-arms, rising twenty-five feet above the deck; while it was so arranged above that by cutting the ropes which held it in position it might be made to fall and enclose in a trap an enemy who might succeed in coming alongside the ship. The carronades were charged to their muzzles, and depressed to the nearest range, in order to sweep around the hull. The *Constellation* was high out of water, and, thus metamorphosed into a nautical citadel, seemed in a condition almost impregnable, so far as boats were concerned. Nevertheless, the enemy attempted to take her by surprise. A large force from the English fleet, some 2,000 strong it is said, on a dark and drizzling night, advanced stealthily upon the ship. But the vigilant guard-boat gave the signal of alarm at their approach, and they retired. The following night the attempt was renewed with no better success. Again, a few nights later, in dark, rainy weather, a third

expedition came up in force. Again the watchful sentinel in the guard-boat discovered them, and moved stealthily so close to the enemy that he could hear the officers speaking. He was discovered, sprang to his oars, and retired; but not being pursued, he returned to watch the enemy's proceedings, and actually kept company with the party, following their movements step by step, anchoring when they anchored, and only leaving them when the ebb tide made, and they withdrew. No farther attempt to capture the well-guarded American vessel was made by the enemy.

So great was the British force, however, before Hampton Roads that the good ship *Constellation* was not able to work her way out to sea. She remained blockaded throughout the war. It is said that during those three years of naval warfare England had 100 pennants of admirals and commodores flying on the American coast. Lieutenant Shubrick, unwilling to remain idle, left the blockaded ship, and was transferred, as third lieutenant of six, to the *Constitution*, Captain Stewart, which had just been refitted at Boston. This celebrated vessel, always a favorite with officers and men, had already received in nautical parlance the name of "Old Ironsides." In February, 1815, the *Constitution* was cruising between Portugal and the Cape Verd Islands, where, on the 20th, two vessels of the enemy were seen in the offing, one a small frigate, the other a large sloop of war. After much nautical manœuvring to prevent a junction between the enemy's vessels, the *Constitution*, at six in the evening, showed her ensign as a challenge, and prepared for immediate action, engaging both vessels of the enemy at the same time. The battle was fought by moonlight. Nothing could exceed the beautiful manœuvring of the *Constitution* between her two antagon-



ists; often shrouded in a dense cloud of smoke, her guns were then silent; again, a moment later, when the moonlight revealed her foe, one broadside was poured out after another with terrible rapidity. At a critical moment, as the cloud of smoke rose, both vessels of the enemy were seen close at hand, and both in positions favorable to themselves. The *Constitution* poured a broadside into the ship abreast of her, and at the same moment handled her sails with such singular skill that the instant she had delivered her fire she backed swiftly astern, compelling the vessel in her rear to move her position, in order to avoid a raking fire in the opposite direction. The larger ship soon after struck. It was the *Cyane*. An hour later the *Constitution* was looking for her enemy's consort, which had been partially disabled, but which now prepared to renew the action. The fire of the *Constitution* was so well delivered, however, that every gun told, and the vessels were so near that the ripping of the enemy's planks was heard by the American officers. The gallant Englishman was compelled to strike. The vessel proved to be the *Levant*, and Lieutenant Shubrick was sent on board to take possession. In this remarkable moon-lit battle Captain Stewart, with one vessel opposed to two, handled the *Constitution* with such consummate skill that the conflict has always been considered as among the most brilliant nautical manœuvring on record.

Lieutenant Shubrick had a narrow escape after the battle was over. He was standing on deck, attending to his duties, when a portion of the mast fell and struck him on the head. He was stunned and would probably have been killed had it not been for the iron boarding cap which he still wore. The iron was indented by the blow, and he re-

ceived a wound on the skull which, in healing, left a small protuberance. This at a later day proved a puzzle to phrenologists, to his own great amusement. On the 10th of March Captain Stewart took his prizes into Porto Praya. The next day Lieutenant Shubrick, then first lieutenant, his senior being absent in the prizes, discovered three large English vessels in the offing, looking into the harbor. Their hulls were concealed by a heavy bank of fog, but their rigging was seen dimly through the lighter mist above. Fourteen minutes later the *Constitution* and her two prizes had cut their cables and were standing out to sea. Captain Stewart was well aware that England, at that date, paid no regard whatever to the rights of a weak neutral. If he remained in the harbor he would, beyond all doubt, be attacked. The *Constitution* was scarcely out of port when the enemy made chase with her three ships. The chase continued until the afternoon. Captain Stewart then signalled the *Cyane* to change her course, which she did, and in time reached New York in safety. The *Lerant* ran back into Porto Praya, where, under the very guns of the Portuguese fort, she was recaptured, in spite of the rights of neutrals. Strange to say the three large vessels of the enemy were engaged in this recapture, leaving "Old Ironsides," meanwhile, to walk rapidly away from them. A few weeks later peace was signed.

Lieutenant Shubrick was made an honorary member of the South Carolina branch of the Order of the Cincinnati, at the close of the war, after the loss of his elder brother in the *Eperrier*, and in especial acknowledgment of his own personal services.

During the years of peace which followed the war of 1812 Lieutenant Shubrick was much in society, where he

was always a great favorite. There was a peculiar charm in his manner which, from early manhood to old age, made him a delightful companion. This rare charm of manner was, indeed, in him a high personal merit, for it was entirely frank and unstudied, the healthful outflow of a generous, courteous, manly nature. There was the polish of high-breeding, but it was the harmony of a fine individual character, underlying the surface, which gave the charm of life and reality. For a gentlemanly naval officer a manner more happy could scarcely be conceived. And his personal appearance was equally in his favor; feature, form, and carriage were all manly and distinguished; the position of his head was fine, slightly thrown back, but as easy as possible, while the frank, fearless, often joyous look from the brown eye, and the smile, always kindly and often delicately expressive of wit or humor, gave additional attraction to the face.

In September, 1815, Lieutenant Shubrick was married to Miss Harriet Cordelia Wethered, daughter of John Wethered, Esq., of the Eastern Shore of Maryland—a marriage which remained unbroken for nearly fifty-nine years.

He went to the Mediterranean rather later, as flag-lieutenant of Commodore Hull. In 1820 he received his commission as commander. In 1829 he was ordered to the command of the *Lexington*, and made a cruise on the coast of Labrador for the protection of the American fisheries. At the close of the fishing season he went to the West Indies and brought home the remains of Commodore Perry. In 1830, the period of the Nullification troubles, he was at the navy-yard in Washington. His commission as captain dates from 1831. During four years, from 1833 to 1837, he was employed on ordnance duty, and from this

period, as experience gave additional value to his services, he was often engaged in various practical duties of importance connected with the navy, and repeatedly received the assurance of the entire confidence of successive Secretaries at the head of the department. His high reputation for fidelity, integrity, promptness, and business capacity was, indeed, well earned by earnest devotion to every duty intrusted to him, whether ashore or afloat.

In 1839 Captain Shubrick first hoisted his broad pennant as commodore, in command of the West India squadron. On his return, in 1840, he was placed in command of the navy-yard at Norfolk. In 1844 he received from the Governor of South Carolina a sword of great beauty in design and execution, as a testimonial of the just appreciation in which his services were held by his native state.

“STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.—COLUMBIA.

“IN THE SENATE, Dec. 15th, 1834.

“*Resolved*, That the Governor be authorized to purchase and cause to be presented to Capt. Wm. B. Shubrick, of the U. S. N., and a native of South Carolina, a sword, with suitable emblematical devices and inscriptions, in the name and in behalf of the State, in testimony of the high sense of this legislature of his distinguished gallantry and good conduct in the remarkable engagement of the U. S. *Constitution* and His Britannic Majesty's two ships, the *Cyane* and *Levant*, which resulted in their capture, on the 20th of February, 1815, and for the admirable skill and coolness displayed by him, as first lieutenant of the *Constitution*, during the subsequent chase of that ship by the whole British squadron, off the island of St. Iago, as well as for his devoted and valiant services during the whole war, which were so well calculated to reflect lustre on his native State.

“*Resolved*, That the Senate do unanimously agree. Ordered to the House of Representatives for concurrence.

“By order of the Senate :

JACOB WARLEY, C. S.

“IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Dec. 15, 1834.

“*Resolved*, That the House do concur in the resolution.

“By order of the House :

R. ANDERSON, C. H. R.

“SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE,

“CHARLESTON, S. C.,

“R. Q. PINCKNEY, *Secretary of State*.”

This resolution is engraved on a shield just below the hilt, and on the opposite side is a star, with the motto, "Honor the Brave." On the scabbard, halfway between the hilt and the point, in relief, is the engagement between the *Constitution* and the *Cyane* and *Lerant*.

On the 13th of May, 1846, war was declared against Mexico. Commodore Shubrick was then in command of the navy-yard at Washington. May 14 he offered himself to the department for active service, and a few days later was informed that the Secretary wished him to go to the Pacific to take command of the squadron on the western coast. June 1 the Secretary, Mr. Mason, wrote to him as follows :

"COMMODORE: You will hold yourself in readiness to proceed in the United States ship *Independence* to the Pacific, for the command of the United States naval forces on that station."

Again, July 9, the Secretary wrote as follows :

"COMMODORE: You are herein appointed to the command of the United States naval forces in the Pacific Ocean, to relieve Commodore John T. Sloat."

The *Independence* was lying at Boston in an unfinished state, and with a new crew, but the broad pennant of the commodore was hoisted on the vessel August 10, and on the 29th she was reported outside of Boston Light. The *Independence* arrived at Valparaiso December 2. Commodore Biddle had arrived at the same port only a few hours earlier with the squadron from the East Indies. There was a singular inconsistency in the orders he had received from the department and those given to Commodore Shubrick. The orders to Commodore Biddle were worded as follows :

"May 16, 1846.

"COMMODORE: A state of war has been declared by Congress to exist between the United States and the republic of Mexico. You will, therefore, with all possible dispatch, appear with the squadron under your command off California, and take command of the Pacific squadron."



Commodore Biddle was the senior officer. The orders to Commodore Shubrick were essentially the same, and of later date. Serious difficulties might, under less favorable circumstances, have resulted from this irregularity in the orders from the department. But it was the first wish of both officers to serve the country faithfully. In accordance with naval etiquette, Commodore Biddle, as senior officer, took command. Commodore Shubrick sailed immediately for Monterey, where he arrived in eight days from Valparaiso, the voyage from Boston round the continent, including delays, having been made in the remarkably short time of 146 days. He proceeded immediately to organize and discipline the forces. On the arrival of Commodore Biddle, in April, he hoisted the red pennant of a subordinate commander, and was sent to blockade Mazatlan. He was soon recalled to Monterey, however, when Commodore Biddle informed him officially that he was about to give up the command and return home. Commodore Shubrick then laid before the department the plans he had already made for taking possession of all the ports on the western coast of Mexico. On the 19th of July the command was formally transferred to him, and he immediately prepared for active operations. A supply of small-arms was procured, and having drilled the seamen of the squadron thoroughly in their use for service ashore, the commander-in-chief directed Captain Lavalette to proceed to the Gulf of California with the *Congress* and the *Portsmouth*, and to commence operations by taking possession of Guaymas, nearly at the head of the gulf—an order which was handsomely executed. On the 27th of October Commodore Shubrick sailed from Monterey for Cape San Lucas with the *Independence* and the *Cygne*, Captain Dupont. At San Lucas he was joined

by Captain Lavalette in the *Congress*. After taking possession of San José, the principal mart of Lower California, and a resort of our whalers, and quieting some disturbances at Todos Santos, he sailed for Mazatlan with the *Independence*, the *Congress*, and the *Cyane*.

Mazatlan was then the most important point on the western coast of North America, containing 11,000 inhabitants, with a garrison of some 1,200 regular troops. On the 10th of November the American fleet came in sight of the town. A plan of the coast and harbor had been given to the commanders, and the position to be taken by each vessel marked on this chart. The wind was moderate, and evening was at hand. The commander-in-chief inquired if the ships could take their positions after dark. The answer from all was affirmative. They were then ordered to proceed. Mazatlan is built on a peninsula. There is a bend in the outer shore called the "Old Harbor." The *Congress* led off in fine style, and swept into position in this outer harbor. The shore being low here, the ship from this point could command several of the roads leading from the town, and effectively cover the landing, should the surf allow this reach of the shore to be chosen for the purpose. It was considered a hazardous anchorage, but a position favorable for attack, and boldly taken in the dim evening light. The *Cyane* moved onward into the New Harbor, her light draught enabling her to anchor so close to the bar that her guns could reach the wharf, and cover a landing there. The flag-ship *Independence* meanwhile stood off for another slight bend in the shore, where a break in the hills gives a view eastward of the most important part of the town. Steadily she made her way in the darkness to the position allotted to her, dropped her anchor, and swinging round, her stern

almost in the rollers, the proud ship showed her imposing gun-deck tier of lights to the town. No vessel had ever before taken the anchorage chosen by Commodore Shubrick for his flag-ship on that November evening. An English vessel of war was lying at anchor in the harbor, and her officers expressed their admiration strongly at the skillful manner in which the three vessels took their different positions, investing the town so effectually.

Early on the morning of the 11th Mazatlan was summoned to surrender. Colonel Telles, the commander of the port, tore up the letter of Commodore Shubrick, with insolent threats. Orders were then given for an immediate landing. The town was not to be bombarded, but to be taken by assault. Owing to the condition of the surf, no attempt to land could be made from without, and it became necessary to enter the harbor in boats, and to land at the wharf. The boats of the different ships entered the harbor in three lines, commanded by their respective officers, Commodore Shubrick directing their movements in person. Five pieces of artillery, recently captured in Lower California, and under the command of Lieutenant Livingston, accompanied the detachment. The *Cyane* sprung her broadside, to cover the landing if necessary. The movement of the boats was swift; the men were soon ashore, and formed into companies while the artillery was landing. The whole force, 600 strong, then began their march toward the citadel or fort which protected the town. They had expected decided opposition, the Mexican force being nearly two to one, exclusive of the inhabitants of the town, which in itself offered many natural facilities for defence; but the threats of Colonel Telles proved idle bluster. The Mexicans, who had recently fought with determined resist-

ance on several occasions in California, now retreated without striking a blow. Commodore Shubrick marched his force through the town to the citadel without opposition, and the American flag was hoisted under a salute from the *Independence*. Measures were immediately taken for the defence of the captured town; a garrison of seamen and marines was organized, and Captain Lavalette appointed governor. The squadron moved into the harbor, the terms of occupation were arranged with the municipal junta, the custom-house was opened, and a tariff of duties, modified to suit the trade of the coast, was established. In five months more than \$250,000 of duties was collected at this port. Redoubts were erected and manned on the landward side of the town to anticipate an attack, and sorties were frequently made to drive the Mexican force farther back into the country. The towns, and other lesser places captured, were held until the close of the war, but the large force required on shore for this purpose prevented Commodore Shubrick from fully carrying out his original plan of taking possession of Acapulco and other small ports to the southward. In July, 1848, on the proclamation of peace, he returned home in the *Independence*.

His first duty after the Mexican war was connected with the ordnance department.

In the summer of 1851 he left his home in Washington and came up into the highlands of Otsego. The friend of his youth, from whom he had never known a moment's estrangement, was fatally ill. The half-paralyzed hand could no longer hold the pen, but the mind was still active, and the heart warm as ever. At that moment, indeed, within a few weeks of his death, Mr. Cooper was dictating passages connected with a continuation of the *History of the*

*Nary*, and another work which his sanguine spirit still hoped to finish. The friends enjoyed some pleasant, peaceful days together; both were cheerful and buoyant by nature. They parted with the affection of nearly fifty years still warm and true. It was their last meeting on earth; but the survivor carried with him an affectionate regard for the memory of his friend for nearly a quarter of a century longer, until the latest days of his own life.

In August, 1852, a Light-house Board was established by act of Congress. Commodore Shubrick was placed on the board, and became its chairman, a position he held for nineteen years, although there were interruptions when his services were required elsewhere.

In the summer of 1853 he was employed on important and critical duty connected with the vexed question of the fisheries. These fisheries on the coast of the British Provinces are of two kinds, the deep-sea fishing for cod and halibut, and the in-shore fishing for mackerel and herring. By the treaty of 1783 the right of fishing on the Grand Bank, in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, on portions of the coast of Newfoundland used by British fishermen, and on the coasts, bays, and creeks of all other of H. B. Majesty's dominions in America, was conceded to the United States. After the war of 1812, however, England claimed that by the war all past treaties were abrogated, and now chose to make a distinction between the *right* of the United States to the deep-sea fishing, which it did not deny, and the *privilege* of the in-shore fishing, declared to be abrogated by the war. It was not until 1818 that the question was partially settled by a convention, which awarded to the United States the right to fish in the waters of certain parts of the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador, and other



British possessions in North America, provided the American vessels *did not fish within three marine miles of the shore*. Here lay the difficulty. The British authorities measured the three marine miles from an imaginary line drawn from headland to headland, and sought to exclude American fishermen from all the numerous bays and indentations of those coasts, including the vast Bay of Fundy. Diplomacy perched on those headlands for many a long year. The great law-officers of the Crown sustained the colonial headland doctrine. And yet the word itself is not found in the convention of 1818. Matters became more and more complicated. Vexatious laws were passed by Nova Scotia authorizing seizures of all American vessels within the headland line. The colonial secretary in England declared that in future an armed force should be stationed every year on the coast of Nova Scotia to carry out the headland theory. Many seizures of American craft followed this course. It was in the midst of these difficulties that Commodore Shubrick was ordered to the fishing grounds in command of a squadron. The aspect of affairs was very threatening. A little rough handling of the subject might have brought on war. Perhaps no better testimony to the value of his services and his high personal character could be found than the choice of Commodore Shubrick for this delicate duty. In his hands the honor of the country would be safe beyond all doubt, while at the same time his discretion, his sense of justice, and the courtesy of manner for which he was distinguished would temper his decision. In July he sailed from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in command of the squadron ordered to the fishing grounds, the *Princeton* bearing his broad pennant. The work allotted to him was very thoroughly done. Preliminary inquiries were made of

the collectors of our own Eastern ports, and of the principal houses directly connected with the fisheries. The *Princeton* then proceeded to Halifax. The different vessels of the squadron, including the flag-ship, were all very actively employed, during the entire cruise, visiting every point of any importance within the wide range of the fisheries, and carrying the flag of the country into waters where it had never been borne before by a man-of-war. And while discharging this duty with the utmost fidelity, Commodore Shubrick succeeded, by a wise combination of firmness and courtesy, in conciliating the British authorities. At Halifax he met Admiral Seymour, then commanding the British forces on the fishing grounds. The conference with Admiral Seymour settled satisfactorily the most pressing questions under temporary arrangements, looking forward to a treaty of reciprocity on the same subject then under consideration, and which was signed the following year. The English authorities in the Provinces, both civil and military, were very decided in their gratification at the just and conciliatory course taken by Commodore Shubrick and his officers on this occasion. As usual, the discipline of the fleet was excellent. A brilliant public entertainment was given by the civil and military authorities of Prince Edward Island to Commodore Shubrick and his officers at the close of the cruise. The authorities at Washington on the return of the squadron expressed their approbation very strongly. The department "was struck with the amount of service rendered, and with the good judgment with which it was combined," and expressed its "admiration for the promptness, energy, and cheerful zeal shown by the flag-officer and all under his command."

After a renewal of difficulties a few years later, Commodore Shubrick lived to see the inauguration of a happier era

in 1871, when the old forms of a subtle diplomacy were exchanged for the more manly principle of upright arbitration. By the treaty of Washington the old headland doctrine disappears as obsolete. American and British fishermen now have equal rights in those waters and in certain portions of our own coast. The commission appointed by the treaty to meet at Halifax, will, it is hoped, settle permanently all the difficulties of this question.

In 1858 there was again an interruption to the duties of Commodore Shubrick at the Light-house Board. He was once more afloat. For some years there had been difficulties between the government of the United States and that of Paraguay, proceeding from the jealousy of Lopez, who aimed at retaining a monopoly of the commerce of the country in his own hands. At that date in Paraguay the government was the chief merchant and manufacturer. True, a decree of 1845 had nominally opened the country to foreigners, and in consequence of this decree an American company of some importance had purchased lands and established mills and factories on the Paraguay river, some miles below Asuncion, the capital. The gross injustice of Lopez to this company, the obstacles thrown in its way, the vexations it endured, terminated at length in the arbitrary closing of the cigar factory by the government of Paraguay. Personal insults to the American consul and other citizens of the United States also required redress. And finally, when the *Water Witch*, Commander Page, ascended the river, prepared to exchange the ratification of a treaty already agreed upon between the two governments, she was fired upon by a Paraguayan fort. To settle these difficulties, and to show to the countries in the southern hemisphere the force at the command of the United States, a

powerful fleet was sent into those waters, consisting, said President Buchanan in his Message, of "nineteen armed vessels, great and small, carrying 200 guns and 2500 men, under the command of the veteran and gallant Shubrick." Commodore Shubrick sailed from New York in the *Sabine*, his flag-ship, October 17. When three days out the ship was struck by a cyclone, which lasted three days, and threw her on her beam ends. For five hours she was kept down, straining under the terrible force of the hurricane, the roaring of the tempest sounding, said Commodore Shubrick at a later day, as the howling of infuriated wild animals in a forest might be supposed to sound. Every precaution had been taken at the approach of the gale, and the vessel was lying to under bare poles. Had she been sending she must have foundered. Such at least was the opinion of her officers. An examination of her condition after the hurricane proved her to be too much crippled to proceed on the long voyage before her. She was taken to Bermuda, where the authorities courteously offered every assistance, and she was repaired in the dry-dock. With the exception of this delay the expedition was entirely successful. All difficulties were satisfactorily adjusted. The commissioner, Mr. Bowlin, arrived at Asuncion January 25, 1859, and in three weeks all the objects of his mission were thoroughly accomplished. A fleet of nineteen vessels so well commanded proved the best possible argument in favor of the just demands of the commissioner. "To the zeal, energy, discretion, and courteous and gallant bearing of Flag-officer Shubrick and the other officers under his command in conducting an expedition far into the interior of a remote country, encountering not only great physical difficulties, but the fears and apprehensions and prejudices of numerous states, is the country

largely indebted for the success of the enterprise and for the friendly feeling which now prevails toward the United States in all that part of South America." Such was the report of the Secretary of the Navy. The simple dignity and the kindly courtesy of bearing natural to Commodore Shubrick never failed to attract the respect and regard of all whom he met on official duty. "He represented us abroad with men of high rank better than any officer we ever had," said Admiral Dupont. General Urquiza, President of the Argentine Republic, received him with especial honors, and presented him with a handsome sword in testimony of "respect for his high character." Congress, by joint resolution, allowed him to accept this beautiful sword—a graceful close to his last service afloat.

The grave crisis which convulsed the entire country was now at hand. We all remember the firing of the first gun, the roll of the first drum, calling brother to arm against brother. Those were sounds which seemed to pierce our very heart's core. And we can all remember the deep anxiety with which we awaited intelligence of the course taken by this or that distinguished public man. One was wavering, another was steadfast, another had deserted the flag and the country. Probably among the military officers, whether of the army or the navy, there was not one placed in a position more painful, not one more sorely tried, than Admiral Shubrick. The first gun in that fratricidal strife was fired at Charleston, within sight of his paternal home at Belvedere. The first State to take the fatal step of secession was his native State, in whose early history he had always felt a just and honorable pride. In many of the best homes in Charleston, on many plantations of the State, were men, women, and children with kindred blood to his

own flowing in their veins. Scarce a public man in Carolina of honorable name and character who was not known to him; very many were his friends. His high standing as an officer and his personal character rendered his example of importance to the Confederate leaders. Strenuous efforts were made to shake his loyalty by those high in authority in Carolina. The natural strength of his feelings, the unusual warmth of his attachments, must have given additional force to the trial. We draw the veil over what, to a man like himself, must have been hours of anguish. The result is known. No subtlety could mislead his honest mind. No flattery could blind him to plain duty. No force of cutting abuse could move him. He remained at his post in Washington, and after the defeat at Bull Run offered himself to the government for active service. At this date he even volunteered to aid in defending the forts near Washington.

In December, 1861, Congress passed a law creating a retired list, whereby all navy officers are considered "retired" after forty-five years' service, or on attaining the age of sixty-two years. At the time of the passage of this law Commodore Shubrick had fulfilled both of these conditions. But the department used a discretionary power in the application of the law; some exceptions were made, and Commodore Shubrick continued for ten years longer to discharge the duties of chairman of the Light-house Board. In 1862 he received his commission as rear-admiral on the retired list.

Men of upright and unprejudiced minds, as they move onward through life, are often gradually led to raise their eyes higher. Such is the natural result of experience. Holy truths which, though acknowledged, are yet half for-



gotten in the passionate day of youth, rise more clearly before the mind at a period of greater calm and thoughtfulness. Fidelity to every duty, however severe and onerous, however trivial and irksome, was perhaps the most striking virtue in the character of Admiral Shubrick. With him, to know a duty was to perform it at whatever sacrifice. And there was also a manly humility in his nature, which was a fine element in a character so noble. This fidelity to duty, this generous humility, led him year by year nearer to his God. Born and baptized in the Episcopal Church, he became in mature life a faithful communicant of that Church. His attendance at public worship was regular, not only on Sunday, but at other services. During Lent, in the cold gray dawn of the winter mornings, his manly figure was daily seen moving toward the parish church for the early prayers. Yes, and following in his steps came another manly figure from the same household, more humble, less erect, with the gray head and dark face of "Uncle Simon," a worthy freedman, honored and esteemed by many who knew him in Washington. Master and servant knelt daily together at those early services.

Years passed over. He had counted the allotted three score and ten, and still he was engaged in public duties, giving faithful attention to his work, and making journeys of inspection from time to time to different points of the coast. And he was still a charming companion, the reverence felt for his venerable character and increasing years adding a higher interest to the pleasure he had always carried with him into society. His private life from early youth had been one of singular beauty, pure, faithful, generous, manly, in all its varied relations. In 1871 Congress passed a law relieving all retired officers from duty. The

work of Admiral Shubrick, as chairman of the Light-house Board, ceased at that date, which closed a service of sixty-five years, during which he had been unemployed only six years and eight months.

His general health had now become impaired, and his sight was seriously affected. He was compelled to give up reading, which through life had been one of his greatest pleasures. The bright, joyous manner natural to him was now gradually passing away into the quiet of advanced age, though occasionally, with an old friend, he had still a great deal to say in his usual pleasant way. Attachment to his friends remained unabated, and his affections vividly warm to the last. And he was still interested in all public events of importance, whether at home or abroad, hearing the papers read morning and evening. The blindness he had feared never darkened his sight entirely. The dignity of extreme old age was in him very touching, and those who were with him most frequently felt that the loveliness of his character and manner could scarcely be described with full justice.

Surrounded by far more than common love, and reverence, and devotion, he died peacefully at his house in Washington, May 27th, 1874, wanting but a few months of completing his eighty-fourth year.

The general order issued by the Secretary of the Navy on the same day, announcing the death of Rear-Admiral Shubrick, closes with the following passage :

“IN EVERY TRUST COMMITTED TO HIM DURING LIFE HE HAS DESERVED WELL OF THE REPUBLIC, AND, DYING, HE LEAVES TO THE SERVICE THE CONSPICUOUS EXAMPLE OF A LIFE OF WISDOM, COURTESY, COURAGE, AND SPOTLESS HONOR.”

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